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SUBJECT: QUESTIONS ON GOSS MINISTER GARANG'S TRIP TO
WASHINGTON

Classified By: POL Michael Honigstein for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Minister Rebecca Garang's high-profile trip to the U.S. has raised some eyebrows among other SPLM leaders.

¶2. (C) Remy Oller Itorong, Deputy Speaker of the Government of National Unity (GNU) Council of States and a close associate of Salva Kiir, during a meeting on an unrelated topic, pointed out that Garang was received by both President Bush and Secretary Rice, while Kiir only managed a sit-down with the Deputy Secretary (sic). Oller wanted to know if U.S. policy was to undermine Kiir, split the SPLM, and put Garang into power. He was assured that USG officials only wanted to honor the widow of a man they greatly respected. Oller said that the Garang inner-circle has shown a willingness to work with Kiir, but that its members may be emboldened by a perception of unquestioning U.S. support.

¶3. (C) CG Juba officials have previously fielded questions regarding U.S. delegations that bypass higher-ranking officials to meet with Garang, not just to pay their respects, but to engage her on policy issues. Many GoSS officials, however, seem reluctant to discuss the Minister's U.S. visit. In separate meetings with officials of CG Juba, Nhial Deng, a close associate of Garang, had no comment; while Abdum Gua, GoSS Secretary General, deflected a question on the visit and quickly changed the subject.

¶4. (U) A February 14 editorial in "The Citizen," an independent pro-South newspaper, addressed the controversy. The editorial, which defended Garang, explained that she is not trying to usurp Kiir as GoSS President. The writer said Garang is not like Corazon Aquino, a hero's widow elevated to power, but rather like Golda Meir, a woman on a mission in America to drum up support for her cause.
STEINFELD